

Communications Strategy for the Waste & Chemicals Management Division

Overview and Purpose

This Communications Strategy was created to establish a plan that, for the first time, brings together the *Waste and Chemicals Management Division's* communications objectives and strategies into one document. This initial planning effort focuses on existing programs and activities and should provide a resource for management to use when determining how to manage communications in the future. This plan does not identify all the key messages that will need our communications efforts, since there will always be additional messages identified that need to be communicated as situations arise - or as issues change or expand with little notice. Therefore, this plan is a working document that needs to be flexible and opportunistic to meet changing conditions and the needs of the agency and its constituencies. By using this strategy, we can achieve effective communications which in turn can help the organization meet its objectives. It is also intended to provide management with an ongoing strategic planning resource.

WCMD management has the opportunity to communicate and support the key objectives of the division through delivery of corporate messages. These messages, when delivered consistently, are a powerful tool to accomplishing EPA's goals. The support for effective communications of WCMD's strategic plan should begin with management and should be aimed at helping employees and outside stakeholders understand our plans, demonstrating their commitment through personal actions, and devoting the time and resources needed to build the confidence and support the agency needs to meet its goals.

The goal of the Communications Plan is to ensure that the organization's strategic direction is being consistently communicated to all internal and external audiences. This goal recognizes the tremendous communications resources available throughout the division. As a central guide, this plan will provide more uniformity in communications decision making.

What Is A Communications Strategy?

A communications strategy refers to an organization's planned program of communicating with both internal and external stakeholders on all topics that affect them. Determining what to communicate, to whom, when, and through what pre-determined vehicles are the key questions involved in constructing a communications strategy.

Generally:

Knowing the purpose of any intended communication provides a crucial starting point for any communications strategy. The purpose of communication could be any or all of the following:

- to inform (e.g., to notify a community re a cleanup site)
- to require some action (e.g., a response, attendance at a public meeting, etc. - requires a 2-way communication process)
- to change or modify behavior (e.g., encouraging a waste minimization plan)
- to attempt to obtain information - feedback (e.g., public hearings, town meetings,)
- to facilitate the implementation of a change (e.g., a corrective action)

“Strategic communications is just a short-hand way of saying: make good policy and make it stick with consistent, intelligent communications.”

-Edward W. Block
Senior Vice-President, AT&T

The Basics of Communication

To communicate effectively, managers need to understand the basic principles of the communication process. These essential elements are:

1. Sender - (*from whom*) the person who sees a need to communicate and identifies the specific purpose. The sender must be clear about what message is being sent and why. The sender selects the receivers for the message.

2. Receiver (*to whom*) - needs to be receptive to all messages sent and to view them objectively and with an open mind.

3. Key Message - *is the content or subject of a communication.* It can contain one or more of the following: facts, ideas, feelings, opinions, and interruptions. It is imperative that the receiver understand the message as intended by the sender.

4. Vehicle - is the method, way, or technique used to send a message. The message's purpose, receivers, and content determine the best medium to use. There are three broad categories of vehicles: (1) verbal, (2) written, and (3) electronic.

5. Timing - *of a message is crucial* and involves such factors as: (1) frequency of messages, (2) spacing of messages, (3) situation when sent and received, (4) the period immediately preceding or following events.

6. Feedback - *is an integral part* of the communication process but is typically neglected. Effective feedback calls for receivers to respond to verify that they received and understood a message.

“The organizations that are most successful in communications have a symmetrical model upward and downward.”

-Ron Martin

Vice President, American Express

The communications policies and procedures we develop will reflect this division's communication philosophy which should include **what** we have decided to do and **how** we are going to do it. It is hoped that all managers and staff members will promote, by both attitudes and actions, an open communication climate, both vertically and horizontally. It is also expected that the Director's staff will fully support an effective communications program and view communications with employees as a **top priority**. Management should also recognize the importance of two-way communication and commit to excellent upward as well as downward communication always asking themselves "*Are we getting through to our people effectively and are **they** able to get through to us effectively?*"

This communications strategy has identified those internal and external audiences with whom we need to communicate and also lists the various vehicles through which we will deliver our messages. These lists of communication channels are not complete and they will be modified as we become more creative and innovative in developing our communications channels.

Communicating Internally:

It has been theorized by communications experts that organizations operate in ways conceptually similar to those of living organisms (*and I think that analogy might be appropriate for a technical audience, such as we have here at EPA*). For example, like the human body, every part of an organization whether it is an individual, a department, a function, a process or a product, is part of a larger, interconnected system. Each part interacts with a number of other parts simultaneously. Whenever there is some influence on one part of the system, it will have some effect or impact on all parts of the organization.

Therefore, in order for our division's communications to be effective, it must be remembered to look outside a specific program's circle of employees to include all interested parties in order that everyone who has a "*need to know*" is kept informed. *Whenever you communicate a message to someone within the Division, take the time to think who else may be impacted by it, who else may be able to provide input to it, or who else needs to react in some way to your information.*

Know what you want to communicate and **why**. Understand the situation and inform those who need to be informed of what you know and what you do not know. Look at the situation from many perspectives, including being on the receiving end of the message. Using vague words or an incomplete approach could generate misunderstanding and misconceptions. To save time, effort, and energy, start with a clear focus.

Always provide for a two-way communication process and participation. This will help ensure that any message to be conveyed is received, understood, and acted upon in the way the

sender desires. It will also promote attainment of other objectives, such as encouraging employee involvement, providing additional useful feedback, or just obtaining necessary input and information.

“...two-way symmetrical communication process best exemplifies excellent communication.”

-Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management

In her book on global change entitled *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Marilyn Ferguson writes, “*Global communications have encircled our world beyond any possibility of retreat. Now, the whole planet is alive with instantaneous links, networks of people poised for communication and cooperation. Those of like mind can join forces as quickly as you can photocopy a letter, quick print a flyer, dial a telephone, design a bumper sticker, drive across town, form a coalition, paint a poster, fly to a meeting...or simply live openly in accordance with your heart.*” Basically what she is saying is that new technology and new ways of thinking have opened up new ideas about communicating and new ways of communicating with both people nearby and far away. Changes in technology have affected both the speed at which we can communicate and the impact communications can have. New technology allows us more flexibility in our communications media, style, and speed. Our strategies for communicating must both keep up with these technologies and, at the same time, become more people-centered. We must focus on bringing people together through understanding and problem solving. Designing and using more effective internal communication strategies based upon considered thought, proper planning, and a clear purpose in communicating can help make our workplace more effective and more human.

✓ Identification of Internal (Audiences):

WCMD Employees

Communication Vehicles:

E-Mail - used as the preferred method of communication in this division; a group code for all employees in WCMD has been created and is used frequently

Quarterly Town Meetings (used to recognize those employees who have received awards during the quarter - a reinforcement of the division's goals and objectives; refreshments and “getting to know each other” opportunities

More Frequent Use of Voice Messaging - voice messaging gives you the ability to communicate effectively from any touchtone phone 24 hours a day, with one person or many. Group codes have been developed for the Director, the Associate

Directors, and the Branch Chiefs to allow for better communication when the message is time sensitive (and employees in the field need to hear it), too lengthy to explain in an e-mail message, or when, by its nature, it needs a personal delivery. Managers should take advantage of a business tool that allows you to accomplish more in less time with a personal touch

WCMD Employee Newsletter - an electronic vehicle which is intended to: inform WCMD employees of our division's objectives and goals; inspire teamwork and a more cohesive division; illustrate our successes in achieving our goals; and offers personal insights into the real people we work with everyday

WCMD Home Page - the Web Site needs to be updated and kept current - A Web Site Team is being formed to ensure that accurate and timely messages are available to the public at all times; a great resource for people to use in order to become aware and to get answers to their concerns or questions

Distribution of Division Salients - the salients provide an opportunity for information sharing among all WCMD employees; more outreach efforts need to be reported consistently

Group or Branch Meetings - they provide for two-way communication - allows the employees the opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns, alert management to problems, etc. In addition, it affords the manager a chance to convey a consistent and uniform message to all branch employees in a timely fashion

WCMD Pearls of Wisdom - they provide inspirational and motivational messages to the divisional employees

Communications with WCMD Management Staff

Vehicles:

Weekly Staff Meetings - held every Monday afternoon following the Senior Staff meeting - Mtg. minutes and action items are documented for easy follow-up; it also affords the managers and Director's staff an opportunity to provide their feedback to the Director

E-Mail - a group code for the mgt. team has been developed and is being utilized

Octel Phone System - not used as much as it could be used; its full potential is yet to be utilized

Managers' Bulletins or Alerts - periodic communications to help managers increase workplace morale and productivity and to keep managers informed of administrative procedures and responsibilities

Communications with RA

Vehicles:

Salients - are read by the RA; selected salients are sent to all regional employees

Senior Staff Meetings - the Director attends these meetings and briefs both the RA and the Regional Management Team on relevant topics; these meetings afford the Director the opportunity to provide input to the RA and his staff, as

well as receive feedback from senior managers

Briefings - Director and employees attend these meetings to update the RA and, as when appropriate, the Regional Management Team Members, on various topics; these meetings give employees who would not normally come in contact with the RA the opportunity to provide feedback and input to the RA and his staff directly

Communications with SLOs

Vehicles:

It is the RA's expectation that the relationship between the SLOs and the C2s should involve periodic communication about general work, hot issues (politically sensitive policies or enforcement cases under development, lawsuits, state/local bickering that may or may not have a federal angle), grants or other funds to be awarded, success stories, upcoming deadlines, and anything involving either an elected official or the state secretary. SLOs will often call C2s at the last minute for information about something HQ wants to know about immediately. Therefore, it is important to keep the C2 as informed as possible.

Communications with ORC

Vehicles:

The C2 for ORC keeps the Division C2 apprized of upcoming legal actions and draft Press Releases. The Division C2 sends these drafts to the program coordinators for review and input and then responds back to the ORC C2 with any comments, additions, or deletions. The ORC C2 acts as the liaison between the lawyer and the EPA Specialist to ensure timeliness of the Press Releases

The C2 for ORC also keeps the C2s informed regarding SEPs in the pipeline and potential story leads

Communications with Other Regional Employees

Vehicles:

WCMD Website - through the Web site we can keep our regional employees informed about enforcement activities, corrective actions, outreach efforts, and other pertinent information regarding our programs

Through the *Perspective* Newsletter - which is issued approximately every two weeks, we can communicate some of our messages that are time sensitive but informative for all employees

Through *The Inside Story*, the Regional publication that is issued every quarter, we can communicate some of our successes through feature articles

Through *The Annual Report* or the *State of the Environment* we can relate our major accomplishments and achievements as a division and identify our future challenges

Communicating Externally

The basic purpose of communicating with our external stakeholders is to inform, educate and persuade with the objective of keeping the public aware of our policies, actions, goods and services. As is mentioned earlier, the basics of communication involve six elements and if any one element fails, there will be no communication. Since our purpose is to inform, educate or persuade, we want to communicate to specific groups of people - those who will help or hinder our division's attainment of our objectives. Therefore, it is important to understand *who* to reach, *how* to reach them and *what* to say.

✓Identification of External Audiences:

Public

Personal contact with the public may be our most important communication. An environmental event, a concern, a question regarding our exercise of environmental law or new regulations affords us the opportunity to provide, in simplest language possible, the key messages about that particular issue and the impact or ramifications of taking some action. There are various ways we may communicate with the public and the most common ways are identified below:

Person-to Person Contact - everyone's personal contact with a member of the public could represent a person's only contact and experience in dealing with the EPA. It is crucial that our face-to-face communications reflect the facts, provide health, economic and environmental impacts, and advance the key messages of our division and our Region.

Correspondence - because of the variety of requests and inquiries that come into us from the public, it would be difficult to set stringent guidelines.

However, it should be stressed in group meetings that the accuracy, timeliness and professionalism of our responses are the keys to our success and to the perceptions formed by our most influential customers, i.e., the public, congressional offices, and the regulated community. Correspondence probably falls under one or more of the following 5 categories:

- FOIA requests - are there guidelines for timeliness?
- Citizen Complaints
- Congressional Inquiries
- Technical Assistance
- Customer Service Inquiry

Phone Calls - Regarding routine calls seeking clarification or explanation of a policy or regulatory action, etc., it is suggested that an accurate, concise reply is provided. If a question cannot be answered accurately, professionally, and respectfully, the receiver should ask for the inquirer's phone number and commit to a return phone call. Managers should emphasize that if research is required, it is suggested that the return call be made in a timely manner, i.e., the same day as the call or the day after. *Always look for an opportunity to convey*

the division's key messages!

Speaking Engagements - requests for speakers should be coordinated with the C2 and the Office of Communication & Government Relations. Acceptance of speaking engagements is strongly encouraged as this is often one of the best ways to deliver our key messages. Acceptance should be coordinated with the Branch Chief and the C2. Prior to accepting an invitation, staff should be aware of pending litigation or enforcement actions.

Outreaches - one of the most effective ways to inform the public of our goals and objectives; some of the more common outreach channels are listed below:

- exhibits
- conferences
- speeches
- public meetings
- town meetings
- presentations
- workshops
- seminars
- pamphlets
- brochures
- fact sheets, etc
- newsletter articles
- stuffers (utility bills, pay checks, notices, etc.)
- LAN messages on companies' e-mail system

Media

Publicity's role must be understood in the larger framework of the total communications process. It cannot be used for any length of time as a substitute for good work or for desirable corrective action. It gets the issues and ideas on the public's agenda for public debate. It can create an awareness of new ideas and new products. It can put the spotlight on an organization's good works and put a personal touch on it. Therefore the objectives of doing media can be categorized into four categories:

- **advocacy** - trying to get the readers or viewers to agree with our position on a particular issue
- **public service** - providing information that is useful to the public
- **public information** - the objective is to create goodwill for the agency; this type of publicity concentrates on telling the public what the agency is doing for the public and how this action benefits the public (e.g., stories that tell how we're protecting the environment or cleaning up pollution or protecting your health)
- **announcements** - a simple statement of fact, such as stating that a meeting will be held, or telling a community that they must conform with the

rules of EPA

Why bother doing publicity?

We encourage publicity for the following reasons:

- because there is a growing recognition and expectation of the public's right to know
- because public information is crucial to confidence in government
- because there is a need to constantly inform citizens about our services and programs
- because the goal is not only supplying information but building trust and understanding.

Types of Media Contact: (Coordinated through the C2 and the OCG)

- **News Conference** - used only to communicate new and important messages
- **Media Availability Sessions** - newsmaker is available for interviews at an event (e.g., speech, opening, etc.)
- **Media Interviews** - one on one (*print and electronic*)
- **Press Releases** - to draw attention to a significant development
- **Fact Sheets and Media Kits** - prepared for a specific topic
- **Appearances on Talk Shows** - reaching a large audience - requires a hook with broad appeal (*radio and TV*)
- **Op Eds** - opportunity to present comments in your own words
- **Public Service Announcements** - an unpaid announcement that promotes the programs of government or that serve the public interest

State and Local Agencies

Contact with state and local agencies is of the utmost importance in our communications strategy. Coordination with the states is necessary for program management, program consistency, and program effectiveness.

Vehicles:

Phone contact -regular phone contact by program coordinator with their state counterparts keep all informed and aware of both federal and state activities
Newsletters - Divisional newsletters, such as, the FIFRAGRAM newsletter (for asbestos and pesticides) and the RCRA quarterly newsletter keep the states informed of new regulations, procedures, and other pertinent information
Meetings - WCMD management and program coordinators meet regularly with their state counterparts to discuss the objectives, measurements, and enforcement activities of our goals

Regulated Communities

Communication with the regulated communities is necessary to keep them informed of our regulations, enforcement actions, and assistance efforts.

Vehicles:

- Press Releases
- Fact Sheets
- Prepared articles for industry newsletters
- Prepared e-mail messages
- Payroll stuffers
- Seminars
- Workshops
- Personal Contact

Community Interest Groups

Communications must be maintained with community interest groups through personal contact by the staff who respond to inquiries, concerns, and questions raised by these groups. In addition, the staff and the C2 will attend public hearings and meetings whenever possible.

Specific Targeted Audiences

As other audiences are identified, we will tailor our messages to an appropriate vehicle, e.g., the Builders Guild of PA will receive pamphlets on the dangers of lead poisoning as well as a Fact Sheet and an offer to send an EPA specialist to a membership meeting.

Areas of Divisional Emphasis That Require Internal or External Communication Focus

Asbestos

- targeting school systems and emphasizing key messages relating to asbestos in the schools and communicating them through speeches, packets of information, newsletter articles, press releases, etc.

Pesticides

- ensuring compliance with the registration of pesticides using FIFRAGRAM newsletter to regulated community and state groups
- participating in exhibits and trade shows
- performing outreach and giving speeches to trade organizations, professional societies, schools, garden clubs, etc.
- continuing TOWNTALK with a focus on urban and suburban communities
- promoting the Flower Show/Fall Harvest Show
- publicizing pesticides awareness as they relate to the Urban Initiative, Children's Initiative
- publicizing enforcement actions taken and corrective assistance program
- maintaining good relations with the states

Lead

- publicizing Lead Poisoning Awareness
- publicizing Lead Disclosure Rule
- publishing New Rule for Remodelers and Renovators (becomes effective June '99)
- coordinating and performing outreach efforts - to schools, communities, organizations, and landlords
- publicizing enforcement actions

PCB Program

- publicizing the PCB Amendments (effective Aug. 28) or the "White Goods" Rule
- publicizing PCB transformer registration deadline

EPCRA

- publicize the availability and easy access of the TRI report
- provide assistance to the regulated community
- publicize enforcement actions

State Programs

- recognizing state successes and acknowledging them (on the web, RCRA quarterly newsletter, state publications)
- publicizing the Citizen Complaint Resolution Program - possibly doing press

- releases or working up a human interest story if calls get resolved
- publicizing Info on New Regs /Policy
- developing a profile of the state as a quick reference for RA, DD, etc.
- publicizing authorizations
- promoting publicity on recycling
- publicizing significant grant authorizations
- publicizing the UST deadline
- publicizing customer service contact points

RCRA Operations

- publicizing the positive aspects of a cleanup site, especially as they fall into cities/urban areas or around the Chesapeake Bay area
- informing industries of their responsibilities and our cleanup responsibilities
- conducting and participating in public meetings

RCRA Enforcement & Compliance Assistance

- publicizing the issuance of complaints
- coordinating public meetings
- publicizing UST deadline
- publicizing compliance assistance workshops

Technical Support

- publicizing the Waste Minimization Program and look for outreach opportunities - press releases, trade journal articles, appearances at conferences, seminars, fact sheets, publicizing those industries which have implemented successful waste minimization programs and have been recognized by the Region
- publishing the RCRA quarterly newsletter
- ensuring the information on the Web Site is accurate and timely
- informing the necessary people about the training coordination with the states
- publicizing the accomplishments of the employees in this branch
- communicating all customer service initiatives

Administrative Information

- keeping employees informed on administrative and personnel issues, e.g., performance appraisal system, workplace fairness initiative, awards, budget considerations, travel, training, etc.
- keeping employees aware of the division's Strategic Plan, objectives, and expectations and reinforcing these goals and highlighting our successes within the division on an on-going basis
- reinforcing our divisional objectives to WCMD employees as they relate to the Children's Health Initiative, Cities/Urban Environment Initiative, Environmental Justice Program, Chesapeake Bay Priority, etc. whenever an opportunity arises and publicizing our successes on an on-going basis

✓ Who Is Responsible for All These Communications Objectives?

It should not be assumed that the C2 will complete *all* these communication objectives. Rather, management must become more involved in creating the opportunities for their offices to communicate both internally and externally. Management's communication efforts should be aimed at helping our employees and stakeholders understand our plans, demonstrating their commitment through personal actions, and devoting the resources to build the confidence and support the division needs to meet its goals.

Responsible persons will be identified in each branch for the various outreach opportunities that exist for the division. The C2 will be available as a resource to assist in the preparation for outreach efforts, sometimes participate in them, or identify potential opportunities for branch employees to consider pursuing. Communications between the Branch Chief (or a designated outreach employee) and the C2 will be imperative if we are to succeed in meeting any or all of these objectives.

Regarding internal communications, the C2 must be kept informed in order to relate the successes and achievements of our employees to others. Therefore, again, it is necessary that managers maintain an open communications channel with the C2.

A good illustration of information and responsibility sharing is the *Communications Strategy for Communicating the Strategic Plan* (attached). It demonstrates how everyone plays an important role in communicating our messages - the Director, the Associate Directors, the Branch Chiefs, and the Director's Staff which includes the C2. Although it is the job of the C2 to develop a process by which we will communicate a specified message, it is not always communicated by the C2 but by other responsible divisional employees who share in the ownership of the message.

The Role of the Communications Coordinator (C2)

The role of the C2 is to act as the central point of contact within a Division for both internal and external communications.

To improve **internal communications**, the C2 will help the Division do a better job of communicating with each other by doing the following:

- advise the Director, Associate Directors, the Branch Chiefs, and other key program staff of the existence of significant news stories

- review and edit all the weekly salients to ensure they are crisp, clear and concise

- provide the SLOs with information on hot issues with political implications, and respond quickly to their requests for information

contribute articles or storylines to other Regional publications, e.g., *The Inside Story*, *Perspective* to keep non-divisional employees aware of WCMD's activities/successes

develop and write a divisional newsletter (electronic) which will help provide direction, build morale, inspire teamwork, and illustrate the Division's activities/successes to employees within the WCMD

To improve **external communication**, the C2 will do the following:

participate on the division's Web Site Team to enhance the division's efforts to reach external stakeholders

assist managers and staff with outreach efforts to improve divisional communications of key messages

develop talking points for interviews, special events and speaking engagements; also, prepare the appropriate employees for any media contacts

publicize information about the division's issues, programs, and special events while working through the Office of Communications and Government Relations (OCGR)

educate the public about the division's programs through a variety of outreach opportunities

assist in establishing a relationship with our external stakeholders (community interest groups, environmental reporters, state agency representatives, etc.)

In essence, the C2 will coordinate, consolidate, and serve as the clearing house for activities related to communicating and marketing key organizational messages.

“Face-to-face empowers managers and supervisors to become an organization's frontline communicators.”

- Jim Donahue
Vice President, Duracell International

The Role of the Managers and Director's Staff

The primary key communicator, for most employees, is the immediate supervisor. Therefore, management must take responsibility for a communications effort that inspires pride and confidence among employees. This effort informs people about the news, and more importantly, how it affects them. Good communications improves the clarity, timeliness, and appropriateness of an organization's messages. Managers and Director's staff should assist in creating and maintaining a trusting and healthy communications climate by doing the following:

- giving the right person the right information in the right way at the right time (to get the job done *right*)
- having the appropriate people readily available when needed to discuss important matters
- maintaining open and free lines of communication at all times (horizontally and vertically) with equal emphasis on top-down and bottom-up communication
- communicating continually rather than only in time of crisis
- explaining reasons for important decisions and actions along with their implications for employees
- providing important information to employees, whenever possible, before or at the same time as the general public
- keeping employees fully and currently informed about:
 - agency, region, and division goals (including the Strategic Plan),
 - policies, procedures,
 - problems,
 - important activities,
 - individual job responsibilities,
 - changes,
 - personal goals, and
 - performance expectations and results.

To improve **internal communications**, the Managers and the Director's staff will help the Division do a better job of communicating with each other by doing the following:

- advise the Director, Associate Directors, Branch Chiefs and C2 of significant and sensitive enforcement activities that have the potential for becoming "*newsworthy*" to the media, the Congressional Offices, or other significant interest groups

- review all weekly salients and hot sites to ensure all significant actions have been submitted (e.g., all outreach and enforcement efforts,) and review for accuracy and confidentiality

- forward ideas to the C2 for potential news stories in internal organs, e.g., *The Inside Story*, *Perspective*, or the WCMD Web Page

- maintain continuous and routine communication with division/branch employees

brief the Director and/or the Associate Directors on all significant division/branch activities and programs

notify the C2 about possible story lines or news bites for our divisional newsletter

To improve **external communications**, the Managers and the Director's Staff will do the following:

submit significant, relevant, and timely information to the Web Team for possible inclusion on the WCMD Web Page

notify the C2 about significant division/branch activities, e.g., programs, conferences, special events, for the purposes of getting external publicity

notify the C2 about scheduled outreach activities and the possibility of future outreach opportunities

inform the C2 of contacts with and by external stakeholders (community interest groups, environmental reporters, state agency representatives, etc.)

“By virtue of the impact of government on U.S. society, today’s communications environment, and the way business is conducted, managers must develop strong skills in managing the news media relations. Today there is no place to hide. Today’s media environment is hostile than ever, but managers can be successful if they know what their key messages are, carefully select the appropriate medium, and practice ahead of time.”

- Corrado

From the book: “Getting the Word Out -
How Managers Can Create Value with Communication”

Identification of Key Messages:

Generally speaking, the WCMD statutes include provisions that:

- protect our air from particulate asbestos emissions,
- protect our water and land from inefficient hazardous waste practices and pesticide misuse or runoff, and
- protect our children from the hazards of lead-based paint and other environmental contaminants.

- ensure that environmental information is complete and of good quality so that people living in Region III can make risk-based decisions about their home, school, and work environments.

It's our common goal in the *Waste and Chemicals Management Division* to prevent pollution transfer from one media to another and to strive toward reduction or elimination of environmental contamination.

These are our primary key messages. Specific messages will be identified as program objectives dictate. However, some of our expected communications for '99 will revolve around the following program highlights:

Asbestos

Intact and undisturbed asbestos containing material does not pose a health risk. It becomes a problem when due to damage, disturbance, or deterioration over time, it releases fibers into the air.

Asbestos fibers can cause serious health problems if inhaled. Exposure can result in the risk of developing lung cancer, mesothelioma, or asbestosis. It could take anywhere from 20 to 30 years after the first exposure for symptoms to occur.

Severe health problems from exposure have been experienced by workers who held jobs in industries such as shipbuilding, mining, milling, and fabricating.

Under the *Toxic Substances Control Act* (TSCA), EPA issued the first regulations intended to control asbestos in schools. This regulation was known as the *Asbestos-in-Schools Rule*.

The *Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act* (AHERA) is more inclusive than the Asbestos-in-Schools Rule. It requires local education agencies to inspect their schools for asbestos containing material and prepare management plans to reduce the asbestos hazard.

EPA established the *Asbestos National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air*

Pollutants (NESHAP) which is intended to minimize the release of asbestos fibers during activities involving the handling of asbestos. It specifies work practices to be followed during renovation, demolition, or other abatement activities when friable asbestos is involved.

Removal is often not the best course of action to reduce asbestos exposure. In fact, an improper removal can create a dangerous situation where none previously existed.

EPA recommends in-place management whenever asbestos is discovered. Instead of removal, implementation of a management plan will usually control fiber release when materials are not significantly damaged and are not likely to be disturbed.

If you have any questions concerning asbestos or would like to report illegal or improper asbestos activity, contact the *Asbestos Information Hotline* at 1-800- 438-2474.

Pesticides

By following EPA standards, states are developing and implementing state management plans to identify areas vulnerable to contamination by pesticides.

The *Worker Protection Standard* regulations require EPA to place emphasis on education and training for workers and handlers who may be exposed to pesticides and also on the proper labeling of pesticide products.

EPA conducts a compliance initiative to ensure user and registrant compliance with the *Worker Protection Standard* labeling requirements. It involves compliance monitoring inspections, compliance assistance activities, and enforcement where appropriate.

By ensuring proper pesticide use through enforcement, EPA and the states are helping to protect pesticide applicators, workers, and the safety of our nation's food supply. By identifying and taking action against mishandling, environmental enforcement efforts are helping to deter future pesticide misuse.

Lead Paint Poisoning Prevention

Many house paints made before 1960 contain lead as a pigment which is toxic to humans. When the paint deteriorates and as painted windows are opened and closed, paint dust containing lead is released into the home. This paint dust can be inhaled and eaten by the people living in the home.

Children under six years of age are especially sensitive to lead poisoning which

can cause permanent lowering of intelligence and behavioral problems. About 1.7 million children in the US have blood levels above safe limits, mostly due to lead paint in their homes.

Adults may also be affected by high lead levels with headaches, high blood pressure, digestive problems, memory and concentration problems, mood changes, sleep disorders, and muscle and joint pain.

Lead poisoning can also cause abnormal development of the child if a pregnant woman is exposed.

The Real Estate Disclosure Rule requires owners and landlords to inform potential buyers or tenants about known lead-based paint hazards and the dangers of lead poisoning.

RCRA

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) requires owners and operators of RCRA facilities to clean up contamination resulting from present and past practices, including those practices of previous owners of the facility. These clean up activities are known as corrective action.

Corrective action is typically carried out by the facility owner or operator under the requirements or conditions stated in the RCRA permit or administrative order. In some cases, the owner or operator is required, through an order, to begin corrective action prior to permit issuance.

If the regulatory agency issues a permit to the facility prior to completion of all activities specified in the order, then the agency may require the owner or operator to continue all or some of the activities under the order, or may incorporate the requirements of the order in the RCRA permit schedule of compliance.

The RCRA Waste and Chemicals Management Division of Region III regulates commercial businesses as well as, federal, state and local government facilities that generate, transport, treat, store, or dispose of hazardous waste. Each of these entities is regulated to ensure proper management of hazardous waste from the moment it is generated until its ultimate disposal or destruction. It also regulated owners and operators of municipal solid waste landfills. The regulations stipulate minimum criteria that each landfill must meet in order to continue operating.

The RCRA regulations require public participation, such as public meetings, throughout the permitting process for new hazardous and solid waste treatment, storage, or disposal facilities. Public participation provides citizens with a forum to express their concerns over the construction of a new facility.

UST

The *Underground Storage Tank Program* (UST), authorized under Subtitle I of the *Resource Conservation and Recovery Act* (RCRA) works to prevent the release of petroleum and other products stored in underground tanks. Such releases are the number one source of contamination of ground waters in the U.S.

The Waste and Chemicals Management Division's (WCMD) efforts include providing technical assistance and outreach, conducting compliance and enforcement, and building state capacity to allow delegation of regulatory responsibility.

The *Leaking Underground Storage Tank* (LUST) Program works with states to clean up known releases from UST using a federal trust fund, as well as state insurance and clean-up funds.

There are less than four months remaining for UST system owners and operators to upgrade, replace, or close substandard UST systems. The deadline is December 22, 1998. On this date, owners and operators of UST systems that are out of compliance are subject to fines of \$11,000 per day for every day their UST systems are not in compliance.

The purpose of the December 22, 1998 deadline for upgrading, replacing, or closing existing substandard UST systems is to prevent another generation of leaking UST systems. During the last decade, over 330,000 releases from substandard tanks have been reported. Many of these releases have caused serious environmental damage as well as harming human populations.

Recycling

We should recycle because it reduces our reliance on landfills and incinerators; it protects our health and environment when harmful substances are removed from the waste stream; and it conserves our natural resources because it reduces the need for raw materials.

Because recycling collection programs are very specific depending on your location, the best source of information on where to take materials for recycling is usually your local county recycling coordinators.

Communication Strategy for the Strategic Plan

- Objectives:** - 1.) To communicate to divisional employees the existence of the Strategic Plan, its objectives and goals, and its relevance as our business vision, and explain to them how this year they will be evaluated based on their Strategic Plan accomplishments and achievements.
- 2.) To communicate to the states the business vision which identifies our priorities, objectives, goals, and objectives and ask for their support in our efforts.
- 3.) To communicate to Headquarters our divisional objectives and measures as they pertain to the Strategic Plan.
- 3.) To make the key points in the Strategic Plan available to the public.

Key Messages: - The Strategic Plan outlines the objectives and measures the WCMD will use to evaluate the successes of our programs in FY '99 as they relate to specific goals outlined by the GRPA. It will become the measuring stick the Division will use to evaluate program achievements or accomplishments.

Audiences: - WCMD Employees
State Contacts
Headquarters
Public

Measure: - Number of program objectives met will depend on the understanding and comprehension of the Strategic Plan and its importance by WCMD employees.

Guidance:

The key for managers is to communicate to WCMD employees that every contact with an external stakeholder is an opportunity to accomplish the goals of the Strategic Plan and demonstrate to them how every action or interaction relates to some goal within the plan, i.e., explain to the employees completing FOIA requests how their actions support a goal(s) of the Strategic Plan, specifically.

Employees need to know “what does it mean to me and how does it affect my work?” Managers need to be able to answer that question for them as specifically as possible.

Strategy/Action	Responsibility	Key Events/Target Dates
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WCMD Employees - Conduct group meetings to discuss the Strategic Plan when it is finalized	Managers	- By October 31
- Ensure that each employee knows how their contributions will support the branch in meeting their Strategic Plan objectives (face-to-face meetings) ➤ communicate strategies and expected behaviors to each employee ➤ conduct periodic meetings with employees to identify and address specific barriers and behaviors ➤ set clear expectations and accountability	Managers	- On-going
- Send out a Voice Mail Message regarding the Director's expectations for the division as they support the Strategic Plan - mention that managers will be conducting meetings to discuss the specifics of the plan	Director	- By October 15
- Send out a final copy (via e-mail) of the Strategic Plan to all managers who will distribute it to the employees prior to their branch discussions	Director, Managers	- By October 15

<p>-Inform employees re the successes and accomplishments of divisional employees in support of the Strategic Plan through the following vehicles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤divisional newsletter, ➤award presentations (using awards which reinforce the SP vision statement) ➤division meetings, ➤group meetings, ➤posters, ➤salients, ➤articles in regional newsletters, i.e., <i>The Perspective</i>, <i>The Inside Story</i>, etc. 	<p>Director Managers Director's Staff C2</p>	<p>- On-going</p> <p>Monthly Quarterly or Bi-Annually (Still being discussed)</p> <p>Periodically On-going On-Going Weekly On-Going</p>
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External Stakeholders

Strategy/Action	Responsibility	Key Events/Target Dates
Headquarters - Send a draft of the Division Strategic Plan to the RA	Director	September 16
- Branch Chiefs will contact HQ personnel to notify them that the Strategic Plan will arrive by a specified date and ask their support	Branch Chiefs	September 16
States - Send a draft copy to the states for their input	Director, Deb	September 16
- Associate Directors will contact their counterparts to ask for their cooperation in support of the Strategic Plan	Maria, Jim	September 16
Public - Put significant highlights of the Strategic Plan on the WCMD Website	Wayne, Joan	December 1 (or whenever finalized)
- Develop an easy-to-read brochure for employees and external stakeholders	Joan, Deb	December 1